

**OFFICE OF WATER**

**Knowing Our Waters: Tribal Reporting  
under Section 305(b)**

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# Knowing Our Waters: Tribal Reporting under Section 305(b)

Native American Tribes and Tribal groups have the option of reporting on the quality of their waters under Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act. The goals of Tribal 305(b) reporting are to document the status of water quality and to identify any improvements needed to achieve healthy ecosystems that can meet Tribal needs, including unique cultural or ceremonial needs. This brochure describes the process of 305(b) reporting and the advantages to Tribes that choose to participate. EPA includes information from these Tribal reports in its biennial National Water Quality Inventory Report to Congress, along with information from the 55 States, Territories, and interstate commissions that submitted 305(b) reports.



## What is 305(b) Reporting?

Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act requires each State to prepare a biennial report on the quality of its waters. A 305(b) report describes the extent to which streams, lakes, and estuaries support their designated uses (see box). The report also identifies the pollutants or stressors causing impairment of designated uses and the sources of these stressors (e.g., wastewater treatment plants or mines). Ground water programs and impacts are also described. Rather than presenting raw monitoring data, a 305(b) report presents the results of careful assessment of those data in terms meaningful to the public and governing bodies (e.g., Tribal Councils, legislators). EPA transmits the individual 305(b) reports to Congress along with a summary report on the Nation's water quality prepared using the 305(b) information.

## Why Should a Tribe or Tribal Group Prepare a 305(b) Report?

Tribes are exempted from the 305(b) reporting requirement but may choose to participate and are encouraged to do so. EPA does require Tribes to share summaries of any water quality monitoring data collected using EPA funding.

Benefits of participating in the 305(b) process include the following:

The report presents assessment information in a way that is meaningful to decisionmakers and can be used to set priorities for Tribal resource allocation.

The 305(b) report is a public information tool documenting Tribal actions to protect waterbodies; it increases the visibility of the Tribal water quality programs.

The report calls attention to special issues such as fish tissue contamination from toxic chemicals and ground water contamination.

The process offers an opportunity for Tribal and State technical staff to coordinate assessments and data management for shared waters.

The 305(b) report is a good vehicle for recommending actions to EPA to achieve the objectives of the Clean Water Act and to protect Tribal waterbodies. Recommendations may include the need for additional monitoring, training in assessment or data management, and improved methods for fish consumption advisories.

The data and conclusions could be used to write future grant applications and ultimately acquire additional funding to improve water quality.

Beginning with the 1996 *National Water Quality Inventory Report to Congress*, EPA has highlighted water quality issues as reported by Tribes and will continue to include Tribal summary data on use support, causes, and sources. In addition, support of Tribal cultural or ceremonial uses will be reported.

## **What Is an Assessment?**

Figure 1 shows the relationship of 305(b) reporting to monitoring and assessments. The monitoring process begins with planning to measure clearly identified goals such as water quality standards, coordinating with other agencies, and designing a monitoring program (Step 1). Field staff then collect samples and record their observations about the waterbody and possible sources of pollution (Step 2). Samples are analyzed in the laboratory and results stored in a database (Steps 3 and 4). In the assessment stage (Step 5), analysts review all available information--field data, watershed characteristics, water supply or beach closures, fish kills, data from other agencies, etc. Physical, chemical, and/or biological data are compared to water quality standards or other criteria. Using all available information, the analyst determines the degree of designated use support, the pollutants or stressors, and the sources of pollution. EPA's Regional 305(b) Coordinators can provide information and training to Tribes about assessment methods and can provide additional contacts for water quality standards and criteria.

All States have adopted physical/chemical water quality standards, and many are also developing biological standards based on fish and aquatic macroinvertebrates.

After assessing its individual waterbodies, the State or Tribe prepares a 305(b) report summarizing these assessment results for all waterbodies (Step 6). The 305(b) report includes summary tables and maps of designated use support, causes, and sources of impairment.

For a hypothetical stream, the final assessment might be: Fully supporting swimming use. Not supporting aquatic life use due to sediment and nutrients; sources are agriculture and streambank modifications.

## Contents of a Tribal 305(b) Report

EPA provides detailed guidance to State water quality agencies for preparation of their 305(b) reports. However, EPA recognizes that many Tribes do not have the resources or data to comply with the full 305(b) guidelines. To encourage Tribal participation, EPA has modified the guidelines. These modified guidelines are available from EPA's Regional 305(b) Coordinators. The major components of a Tribal 305(b) report are:

### [An atlas table describing Tribal water resources](#)

A description of Tribal water quality programs and issues of concern

Descriptions of monitoring programs and assessment methods

### [Summary tables of use support in streams, lakes, and estuaries](#)

### [Summary tables of causes and sources of impairment](#)

Map(s) of waters showing degree of use support, causes, and sources

A description of public health concerns

Narrative or tabular presentation of ground water resources and problems

A [table](#) listing waterbodies, degree of use support, causes, and sources.

Examples of several of these components are provided here. Tables 1 through 4 are examples of 305(b) summary tables and Figure 2 is a map showing designated use support, all taken from two Tribal 305(b) reports. Table 5 shows hypothetical data for individual waterbodies in the format requested by EPA for Tribal reports. If all the topics listed above cannot be covered in a Tribal 305(b) report, EPA encourages the Tribe to present available information in whatever form is appropriate--e.g., tabular, narrative, or graphical (map) format. EPA also encourages Tribes to coordinate with State and Federal water quality agencies, including the EPA Regions, on topics such as assessment methods in preparing their 305(b) reports.

## Getting Started

EPA encourages interested Tribal representatives to contact the appropriate EPA Regional 305(b) Coordinators for information about technical and financial resources. Also, each State has a 305(b) Coordinator who can provide copies of State 305(b) reports and share data and information on assessment methods. It may be mutually beneficial for Tribes and States to collaborate on assessments and reporting. For example, common assessments would be very appropriate for shared water resources. Opportunities for collaboration would need to be evaluated by each Tribe on a case-by-case basis.

Most States use a database to track information on individual waterbodies for use in preparing their 305(b) tables. EPA has developed a personal computer program, the Waterbody System, for this purpose. (A simple spreadsheet, similar to Table 5, may suffice if a Tribe has a relatively small number of waterbodies to track.) The Waterbody System is available to interested Tribes through the EPA Regional 305(b) Coordinators or from Tod Dabolt, National Waterbody System Coordinator, at (202) 260-3697, [Dabolt.Thomas@epa.gov](mailto:Dabolt.Thomas@epa.gov).

For information about the National Water Quality Inventory Report to Congress, contact Susan Holdsworth., EPA's National 305(b) Coordinator at (202)-260-4743, [Holdsworth.Susan@epa.gov](mailto:Holdsworth.Susan@epa.gov).

**Designated Uses for Streams on the Campo Indian Reservation**

- Cold- and warm-water aquatic life
- Wildlife habitat
- Shellfishing
- Swimming
- Drinking
- Agricultural
- Cultural/ceremonial

**Table 1. Atlas Table**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Value</b>
Reservation population (residents)	244
Reservation surface area (acres)	15,480
Total miles of rivers and streams	31.4
Miles of intermittent (non-perennial) streams (subset)	31.4
Number of lakes/reservoirs/ponds	10
Number of significant Tribally owned lakes/reservoirs/ponds (subset)	2
Acres of lakes/reservoirs/ponds	3.5
Acres of significant Tribally owned lakes/reservoirs/ponds (subset)	3.0
Acres of freshwater wetlands	80.3

**Table 2. Individual Use Support Summary**

<i>Type of Waterbody: Rivers and Streams (reported in miles)</i>						
Use	Size Supporting	Size Supporting But Threatened	Size Partially Supporting	Size Not Supporting	Size Not Attainable	Size Unassessed
Fish consumption	0.4					31.0
Shellfishing						
Aquatic life support			22.2		9.2	
Swimming			16.1		15.3	
Secondary contact			16.1		15.3	
Drinking water supply						
Agriculture	22.2				9.2	
Tribally defined: culture/tradition						9.2

**Table 3. Summary of Stream Miles Impaired by Various Pollutants/Stressors**

<b>Size of Waters by Contribution to Impairment</b>		
<b>Cause Category</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Moderate/Minor</b>
Nutrients		22.2
Flow alterations (channelization)		0.1
Other habitat alterations (streambed, riparian)	21.8	
Pathogen indicators		21.8
Noxious aquatic plants		22.2

**Table 4. Summary of Stream Miles Impaired by Various Source Categories**

Size of Waters by Contribution to Impairment		
Source Category	Major	Moderate/Minor
Agriculture (livestock grazing)	22.2	
Construction (roads and culverts)		1.5
Resource extraction		0.3

**Table 5. Waterbody-Specific Assessment Data for 305(b) Reporting\***

Waterbody Name	Waterbody ID	Description	Total Size	Size Impaired	Designated Uses
Mill Creek	TT-001	Source to mouth	10 mi	6 mi	Aquatic life Ceremonial
Sky Lake	TT-002	Entire lake	50 ac	0 ac	Aquatic life Drinking water
Back River consumption	TT-003	Downstream of Giant Mine	50 mi	25 mi	Aquatic life Fish
Spring Branch	TT-004	Source to mouth	15 mi	15 mi	Aquatic life Swimming

Degree of Use Support	Causes	Sources	Type of Assessment	Comments
Nonsupport Nonsupport	DO, ph, nutrients, sediment	Agriculture, municipal WWTP	Fixed-station chemical monitoring	Need WWTP upgrade
Full support Full support			Creel survey; drinking water data	

Partial support Nonsupport	Metals, pesticides	Mine tailings, agriculture	Fish tissue data; biosurvey	Fish consumption advisory for mercury, lead
Nonsupport Full support	Sediment nutrients modification	Agriculture, streambank sampling	Biosurvey; bacteria needed	Streambank stabilization

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\*Hypothetical data to illustrate simplified format for 1996 Tribal 305(b) reporting.  
WWTP = wastewater treatment plant

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### **Common Causes of Water Quality Impairment (Pollutants and Stressors)**

Flow alterations  
Metals  
Nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus)  
Oxygen-depleting materials  
Pathogens  
Pesticides  
Salinity  
Sediment  
Taste and odor

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### **Common Sources of Water Quality Impairment**

Channelization  
Feedlots  
Industrial discharges  
Irrigated crop land  
Land disposal  
Municipal discharges  
Natural sources (e.g., salt deposits)  
Pastureland  
Silviculture  
Streambank modification  
Surface mining

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# **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 305(b) Coordinators**

For more information about the National Water Quality Inventory Report or for additional copies of this document, contact:

Susan Holdsworth  
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